

Reconstructing Iraq

Restoring Education



Photo: William Armstrong

Iraq had one of the best education systems in the Arab world prior to the 1990s—it provided universal primary education and lowered women's illiteracy. But those successes have been significantly eroded. By 2003, primary school enrollment had dropped to 76.3% and secondary school enrollment was down to 33%—girls were nearly twice as likely to be out of school as boys.

USAID recognizes that education is key in establishing a democracy that will respect the will of the Iraqi people, and in generating economic growth. The Agency seeks to reestablish primary schooling for Iraqi children, create new salary structures for teachers and Ministry of Education employees, and increase overall school enrollment throughout Iraq.

On behalf of the American people, USAID:

- Launched a “back to school” campaign with UNICEF and delivered 1,500 school kits that helped 120,000 students in Baghdad return to their classrooms in May, 2003. In preparation for the next school year, USAID is in the process of procuring 1.2 million kits for secondary school students and 4,000 kits for their secondary schools.
- Inventoried 1,100 schools in Al Basrah with assistance of the Ministry of Education, began making grants to refurbish a number of those schools, and finalized plans to distribute 8,000 school and student kits to the 700 schools most in need prior to the new school year beginning in September, 2003.
- Funded UNESCO to print and distribute 5 million math and science textbooks for the beginning of the next school year.
- Began establishing partnerships between American colleges and universities and Iraqi institutions of higher learning involving health, education, agro-industry, engineering, and other topics.
- Is working with officials from the Iraqi Ministry of Education to identify ways to deliver additional school supplies nationwide in time for the new school year.

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